00699

1969/08/04

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Participants: Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge
Phillip Habib
Henry A. Kissinger
William A. K. Lake

Date and Place: Paris - August 4, 1969

Mr. Kissinger outlined the President's view that we have made as many unilateral concessions as we are going to.

Mr. Habib agreed that Thieu need make no more moves unless there is "significant movement" by the other side. Habib said he thought that the situation in the negotiations is now like that of last June-August, when the other side was simply marking time before moving in the fall. He said that we have to show them how to be forthcoming.

Mr. Kissinger said that, with regard to withdrawals, we must have a clearcut assurance that once withdrawn, North Vietnamese are not coming back -- an unambiguous verification process. A written document per se is not necessary.

Mr. Kissinger stated that the President had said in response to questions from Ceausescu that we would not accept the formation of a negotiated coalition government or a unilateral withdrawal of forces. He was flat on this.

Mr. Habib said that they had not yet used their authority to offer to pass messages on a political settlement from the other side to the GVN. They might use it later. Mr. Kissinger did not object, but asked that if done, it be done coldly and precisely.

Mr. Habib said that the North Vietnamese had not yet gotten the message on our position, but he thinks they are getting it. Mr. Kissinger said that if they make it "Nixon's War," he may try to win it. He does not want to see Communist troops in Saigon.

In response to Mr. Habib's question, Mr. Kissinger said we should not yet indicate we have nothing more to say. But we should shut off their endless speeches about our sincerity and avoid being placed on the defensive. The key is to convince them that the framework is not to be changed.

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Ambassador Lodge said that they will never agree to really free elections, and we shall therefore never see them. But we may get a mixed commission of some sort. Mr. Kissinger said he did not expect to see elections either. There will be no winner-take-all solution.

Mr. Habib agreed that we must convince them that the President can't hold still after November 1.

Mr. Kaplan and General Weyand joined the conversation at this point. Mr. Kissinger said that Kaplan should hit hard the theme of "no more unilateral concessions" in his dealings with the press.

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